

UNICEF Kosovo Office

IDD Elimination in Kosovo

**Progress Donor Report
to the
United States Agency for International Development**



Health and Nutrition Unit

December 2005

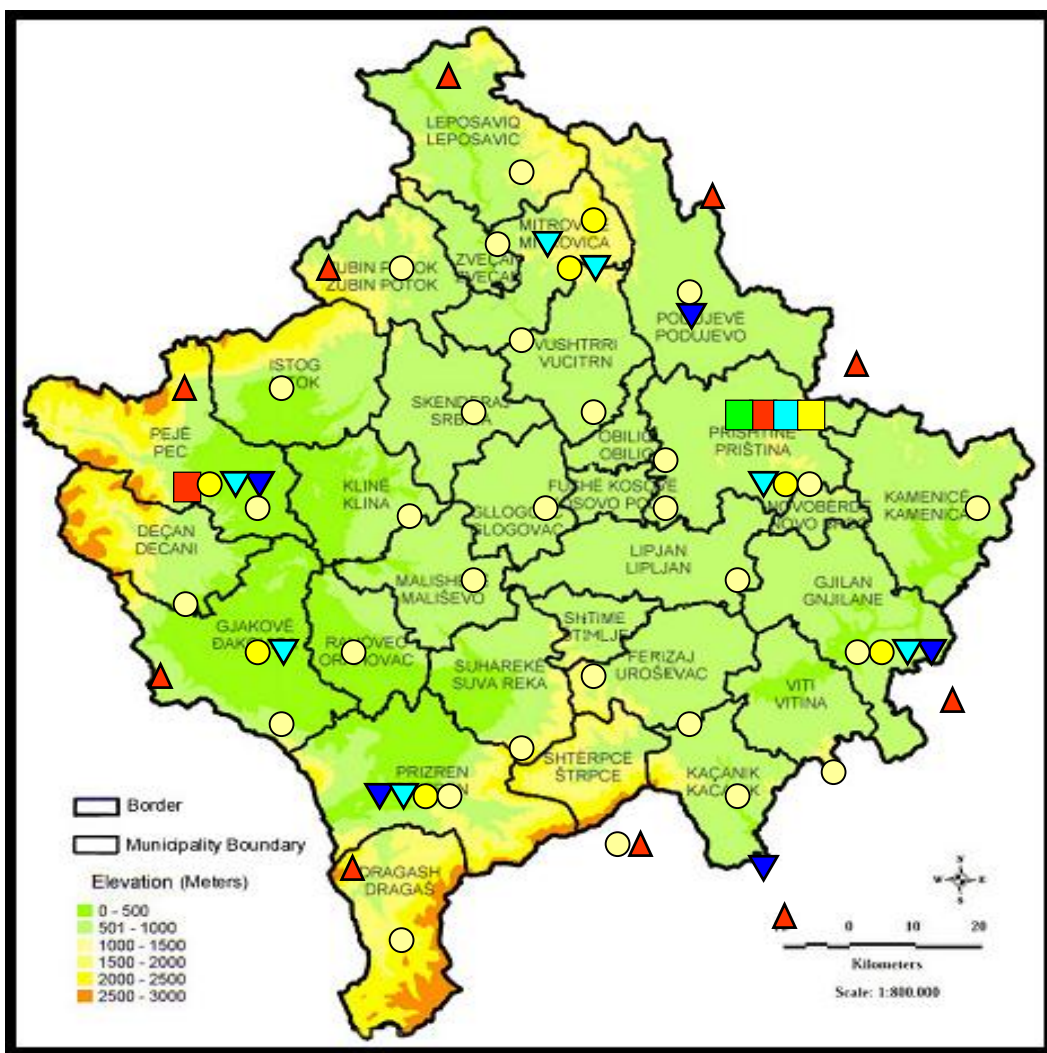
Contribution Data Cover Page

Donor report to USAID

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Assisted programme / Project:	Health and Nutrition Unit
Donor reference:	N/A
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P/L. reference number:	N/A
Total contribution:	USD 90,000.00
Indirect Prog Support Costs:	USD 8,181.00
Cross sectoral costs:	USD 6,546.00
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Balance of funds available:	USD 58,992.51
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Map of Kosovo

Kosovo¹



Legend:

	Custom Terminal (UNMIK)
	Border Passes (UNMIK)
	Referent Laboratory (MOH)
	National Institute for Public Health (MOH)
	Regional Institute for Public Health (MOH)
	Central Inspectorate (MOH)
	Regional Inspectorates (MOH)
	Municipal Inspectorate (Municipalities)
	Faculty of Agriculture (MOA)

¹ Currently administered by the United Nations pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1244

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	0
Narrative Report.....	2
Statement of problem.....	3
Statement of objectives.....	4
Statement of strategies	5
Progress report	5
Future Work Plan	6
Financial Utilization Report	7

Executive Summary

Through implementation of the multi-sectoral policies and programmes the Health and Nutrition Unit is working towards the sustainable and qualitative delivery of integrated health care services for children and women.

Micronutrients programmes, and in particular interventions directed towards the elimination of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD), are a recent introduction in the public health system in Kosovo. With the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and with the engagement of local public health institutions, UNICEF succeeded to introduce and establish the first micronutrient programme for Kosovo, directed towards IDD elimination.

The overall goal of the 2005-2009 five-year programme of cooperation between UNICEF Kosovo and the PISG is to ensure that children and young people belonging to all ethnic groups and, in particular, girls and other marginalised and disadvantaged children, fully enjoy their rights to survival, development, protection and participation.

The main objective of the project is to achieve universal salt iodization of all salt imported to Kosovo by the end of 2006. Based on the assessments done and on the results presented by the institutions in charge of the salt quality monitoring system, today over 90% of imported salt for human and animal consumption is adequately iodized. This achievement contributes to ensure children's and women's rights to survival and development, goals highlighted in the Millennium Development Goals and in the World Fit For Children Agenda.

Specifically, the USAID grant supported the UNICEF Kosovo Office to (a) maintain and build further system and institution for Iodine Deficiency Disorders and Universal Salt Iodization and (b) perform extensive and extended community social mobilization for increasing demand and consuming iodized salt towards reducing prevalence of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD).

Through this project were reached the whole Kosovo population and in particular women and children. UNICEF estimates that this public health intervention reached estimated two million people from all ethnic communities living in Kosovo. Direct beneficiaries of capacity building and provision of equipment were public health institutions, the National Institute of Public Health (NIPH), sanitary inspectorates at the central and municipal level and border inspectorates.

The activities undertaken and the progresses made so far have brought Kosovo closer to the achievement of Universal Salt Iodization. Still, additional efforts are needed to complete the process and ensure sustainable IDD elimination.

In this context, the main constraints are related to the poor functioning of governmental structures and the division of competencies and responsibilities among the institutions involved in this cross-sectoral programme. Constraints relates also to security issues and lack of control over border areas in northern Kosovo.

Future activities will be directed to further support and ensure that sustainable processes and mechanisms are in place and fully functional to achieve sustainability of the USI in Kosovo.

Narrative Report

The USAID grant supported UNICEF in Kosovo to (i) facilitate coordination and networking between different levels of institutions involved in this programme (ii) maintain and strengthen further capacity and functioning of Kosovo IDD working group and (iii) support and ensure functioning of salt quality monitoring system and biological oversight testing. These activities were very strongly supported by extended and

extensive social communication and public education campaign addressing IDD/USI and nutrition practices.

During the reported period UNICEF continued to advocate and facilitate coordination of different institutions involved in the programme. UNICEF facilitated and supported functioning of the IDD Working Group comprised from a multi-sectoral technical team of experts in the area of public health, clinicians, sanitary inspectors, lab technicians and border-custom officials.

UNICEF continued to support local capacity building, strengthen and exchange experience between the local and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia experts. In addition UNICEF supported attendance of national officer and local experts in the regional workshop for micronutrition programme to build capacity towards elimination of micronutrient malnutrition with particular focus on iodine and flour fortification.

UNICEF continued to support the National Institute of Public Health and for the measurement of the iodine concentration in salt samples and urinary iodine excretion collected from all over Kosovo based on the assessment plan agreed by the IDD working Group. This lab also support field quality systems at the border level, municipal level and field locations covered by sentinel sites, i.e. out-reach IDD assessment teams at the community level.

All interventions were supported by a strong advocacy and social mobilization efforts which used all available communication channels, such as electronic media, newspapers, retailers and hypermarkets and other communication means. Information, education and communication components of this project reached all segments of the salt “road” from importers down to the consumers table.

Statement of problem

Scientific evidence proves that preventable micronutrient deficiencies contribute to high morbidity and mortality rates and impaired cognitive development of children and women. Iodine deficiency can lead to impaired mental and physical development, congenital abnormalities, cretinism, abortion and preterm delivery.

Until recently, issues related to micronutrient deficiencies in Kosovo were not studied and documented and as a consequence not known and addressed. Information on micronutrients deficiencies was mostly anecdotal, fragmented and/or aggregated at the level of the Former Yugoslavia. In addition, the collapse of the centralized public health system and scarce human resource capacity in this field in Kosovo resulted in very poor knowledge and capacity to assess, analyze and act in this specific public health area.

Iodine deficiency consequences have been historically and endemically present in mountainous areas of western Kosovo (Decan, Peja, Gjakova and Sharr). Goiter rates were estimated to be high, up to 60%. IDD activities and salt iodization started in former Yugoslavia in the 1960s. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey undertaken in 2000 in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (the survey did not cover the Kosovo), estimated that 73% of households used iodized salt.

All salt used in Kosovo is imported. Supply channels in the 60s up to the 90s were established within the Former Yugoslavia. Quality control systems and trade patterns

were dramatically disrupted by wars, conflicts and political and economical crisis that took place in this part of the Balkans. Immediately after the war, because of the lack of quality control mechanisms, importers started to use a wider variety of import channels and producers (such from the Former Yugoslavia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Turkey and Middle East countries). Subsequently, transport costs, and consumer sensitivity to both brand and quality led to the re-establishment of purchasing patterns by importers which resulted in salt being imported mainly from three producers, namely from Montenegro, Bosnia and Serbia. Currently, the salt entering Kosovo comes from Ulcinj in Montenegro (57%), Tuzla in Bosnia and Herzegovina (29%) and from the salt processing factory in Belgrade in Serbia (5%). Quality standards of listed producers follow good quality assurance measures and have consistently met importer specifications. There are approximately 10 regular salt importers from above listed locations.

In 2001-2002 for the first time the Institute of Public Health of Kosovo, the Institute for Biochemistry and the Institute for Health Protection in Zvecan (Kosovo-Serb run institution) supported by UNICEF and in collaboration with the Italian Institute for Food and Nutrition (INRAN) undertook a Kosovo-wide Micro-nutrient Status Survey. The study was based on a representative sample, targeting all clustered entities and areas of Kosovo. Results from this survey led to the establishment of comprehensive baseline information in the area of nutrition and for the first time revealed the need for nutrition related programmes in Kosovo.

The survey covered 4,360 under-five children and women of childbearing age (between 18 and 45 years) in 1,310 households. An additional component of the survey was the evaluation of goiter and iodine levels among 1,819 school-age children (6-12 years). The results provided baseline data for the health and micro-nutrient status of children and women of childbearing age and helped the public health sector and its partners to determine future activities to specifically address nutritional deficiencies affecting children and women in Kosovo.

One of the objectives of the survey was to give a comprehensive picture of the IDD situation in Kosovo. A summary of the main survey results related to IDD may be summarized as follows:

- 50% of school aged children and women surveyed had low values of urinary iodine excretion.
- 14% showed severe iodine deficiency.
- 3% had palpable goiter with a very small percentage (2%) having a visible goiter.
- 84% of households surveyed used iodised salt.

Statement of objectives

As approved in the Country Programme document 2005 – 2009 the programme will follow two pronged approach to support the PISG and other institutions to establish systems and policies to reach the international standards set for Kosovo, and to meet their obligations towards families and communities. This will be particularly important in the area of human rights to foster peace and tolerance, and to work towards creating a multi-ethnic society that addresses exclusion, marginalization and discrimination. Secondly, the programme will enable families, communities, children and young people to have adequate skills and knowledge to demand better-quality services and to respect and monitor human rights.

The five year programme goal is that Children and young people belonging to all ethnic communities in Kosovo, particularly girls and marginalised and disadvantaged groups, fully enjoy their rights to survival, development, protection and participation.

The main project goal is to achieve and sustain elimination of Iodine Deficiency Disorders in Kosovo by 2006.

Statement of strategies

UNICEF oriented its support to (i) facilitate coordination and networking between different levels of institutions involved in this programme (ii) maintain and strengthen further capacity and functioning of Kosovo IDD working group and (iii) support and ensure functioning of salt quality monitoring system and biological oversight testing. These activities were very strongly supported by extended and extensive social communication and public education campaign addressing IDD/USI and nutrition practices.

This project contributed to strengthen further capacities of government systems and border control and sanitary inspectorates. In addition, it generated knowledge and lessons learned that are applied in building quality control systems for other food and non-food items imported in Kosovo. Finally, this project complements the regional initiative which aims to eliminate IDD in the CEE/CIS region.

Progress report

The implementation of the IDD project can be divided in three phases:

1. Assessment, Analysis and Advocacy
2. Coordination Mechanisms and
3. Social Mobilization

1. Assessment, Analysis and Advocacy

All salt shipments that enter in Kosovo are checked at the border, and salt testing by titration is done prior to release of the shipment based on WHO recommendations. Testing is performed at the border point and at the National Institute of Public Health (NIPH). Data are compiled in spreadsheets, and these include date of arrival, tonnage, package size(s) and testing results, as well as production facility and Import Company. There is also salt inspection at the retail level performed by the NIPH and the Central Sanitary Inspectorate of the Ministry of Health.

Supported by UNICEF NIPH have undertaken activities for the salt testing at household level and oversight of the biological status of children in randomly selected schools.

2. Coordination mechanisms

Following this phase, the focus of the project was to maintain and strengthen further functioning of multi-sectoral Kosovo IDD working group towards elimination of IDD as an important public health issue affecting the population in Kosovo.

UNICEF facilitated further communication between the Kosovo IDD working group and the Macedonian IDD/USI Committee experience and specifically to the system of the

periodic oversight of the population biological status, the salt fortification process and finally to the main monitoring systems.

UNICEF continued to support the National Institute of Public Health and for the measurement of the iodine concentration in salt samples and urinary iodine excretion. This lab also support field quality systems at the border level, municipal level and field locations covered by sentinel sites, i.e. out-reach IDD assessment teams at the community level.

The NIPH through established group of experts has conducted salt testing at household level and periodic oversight of the children in randomly selected schools in high known endemic places and will produce an integrated annual report which will be distributed to all levels concerned. This group has been supported and trained by a group of experts from the FYR of Macedonia.

UNICEF supported attendance of two national counterparts and one national officers to attend the Regional Micronutrient Workshop “Strengthening Strategies for the Elimination of Micronutrient Malnutrition” organized by the Regional Office in Antalya on April 2005.

3. Social Mobilization

These activities were very strongly supported by extended and extensive social communication and public education campaign addressing IDD/USI and nutrition practices. Its peak was during the period when salt consumption is usually the highest, i.e. in September/October when families in Kosovo do the pickling (conservation) of vegetables for the winter season.

For this purpose UNICEF in collaboration with IDD working group organized and launched a social mobilization campaign in the two main languages spoken in Kosovo (Albanian and Serbian).

The social mobilization campaign comprised the following elements:

- Broadcasting of video clip
- Press release and
- Distribution through available channels of T-shirts, leaflets, flyers and posters.

Future Plans

Future plans in the area of IDD are directed towards reaching the national goal of “Sustained Elimination of IDD in Kosovo by 2006” outlined in project proposal submitted to USAID.

More specifically, the programme will have two components with the following objectives:

a. System and Institutional Building for IDD

1. Maintain and strengthen the Kosovo IDD working group.
2. Develop a sustainable Salt Quality Control System (SQCS) through the:
 - Establishment of the periodic monitoring system at the level of import and retails sale.

- Establishment of the IDD biologic control system for population – Control of Impact.
- Establishment of the integrated data management system and data base.

b. Community Social Mobilization for IDD

1. Reduce the prevalence of iodine-deficiency disorders by increasing the demand for and the consumption of iodized salt in Kosovo.

Financial Utilization Report

Please find attached Utilization Report.

Annex: Pictures from IDD/USI communication campaign and established quality salt control system at NIPH in Prishtina



